

# The Broken Coin

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by Grace Cunard

(Copyright, 1915, by Wright A. Patterson)

## SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principal of Gretzhoft, to place out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoft her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

## FOURTH INSTALLMENT

## CHAPTER XV.

## If Your Majesty Please.

In full view of the spectators, who now had left the dancing floor and gathered in groups at a respectful distance from royalty, Kitty received the envelope from the messenger—the same packet which she had herself sent to the palace that morning for delivery at midnight.

She did this with a fine air of insouciance, for she felt quite sure that success now had met all her plans; nor did the outward appearance of the packet afford any reason to suspect otherwise.

Yet, even as she took the envelope in her hand, there came to her a sharp conviction that something was wrong. It had a strange lightness—it did not seem quite the same as when she herself had sealed it that morning. Hastily, she opened the envelope, her lips compressed. It was empty!

Yes, the mysterious coin was gone. Entrusted to the safest messenger she could find; sent to the king himself; received by the king's trusted official; guarded, as was to be supposed, every moment of the time since it had left her hands—none the less, the coin had disappeared as though some specter hand had abstracted it.

The blank book of surprise which came to her face was something not to be mistaken. King Michael frowned. "What is this, mademoiselle—are we made the subject of some sport? How now?"

Kitty stood regarding first one, then the next of the faces about her. On the countenance of Count Frederick she read only chagrin and surprise equal to her own. There was no trace of guilty knowledge there—she was sure of that. Then another head had come into the game! Some other mind also was interested in the mysterious coin of Gretzhoft.

"What then, mademoiselle?" demanded Michael, himself not yet so fully advised as others regarding the nature of this packet which had been intended for him. "What was it that you were so good as to intend sending us?"

Kitty dared not answer this direct question. She concluded quickly that it would be far safer to add as little as possible to the number of those who knew the full story of the traveling coin.

"Your majesty," said she, turning upon him so dazzling a smile as would have made any man forget all else. "It was nothing! It was but a small favor I would have sent your majesty, to show the acknowledgment of my own country, since your majesty has done such honor to me tonight. Perhaps someone in my humble menage has been unfaithful—if so, it was but small loss after all. If your majesty will forget it and give me a few added days of grace, I will explain—I will try again, I hope with greater fortune."

Michael was ready enough to agree to anything which would bring back to his society this dazzling young creature who stood beside him.

"Very well, mademoiselle," said he, "as you like."

A certain relief was felt by all concerned, as now he turned and made a sign to the leader of the orchestra, who stood, baton poised.

"With us, excellenza!" The king ordered his arm. The king and the young American, of whose origin he knew, and apparently cared to know, nothing whatever, were the observed of all. Michael at least could dance, and as for Kitty, she was an American girl.

As they swept on in the evolutions of the dance, Kitty caught sight of the dark face of Count Sachio.

That she had earned this man's dislike, or at least, had deeply hurt his masculine vanity, Kitty was well enough aware.

As for King Michael, he was extraordinarily sober; which, in his case, was equivalent to saying that he was not extraordinarily happy.

Count Frederick evaded the throes about the king. Unwillingly he turned away his eyes from the beautiful figure of the young American as she danced. He never had seen a woman who thrilled him thus. He himself did not dance. This was no evening of pleasure for him. He had other plans.

Count Frederick started toward the door before a second thought came to his mind. If there should for any reason be miscarriage of his plans—if there should be need for yet greater delay before his final overt act was committed—then he ought to have a care to retain some footing in the

king's good graces. Because, revolution or no revolution, the throne of Gretzhoft was not worth having unless his owner had both halves of this missing coin. Frederick cared not to be a penniless king, and only the united coin could give any king of Gretzhoft actual wealth and actual power.

The murmurs of the people, vague, indefinite, had from time to time been audible at the open door of the grand entrance.

"Why do we starve while they dance?"

They began to edge towards the palace steps, a dark, dense mass. The soldiers were not eager to oppose them with steel. The soldiers were themselves of the people. Moreover, they had had small cause for loyalty to the king and court of Gretzhoft. They were ill paid and ill governed.

The people lacked leadership. Count Frederick had hinged his own plans of action upon one event—the public disgrace of the king—and that event had not occurred.

He frowned as he stood looking out over the dense mass which filled the streets. Even he began to feel, almost in spite of himself, some sort of a vague pity for these less fortunate ones.

Still over the voice of the strings and reeds rose the low mutterings of the mob, strange to hear, impossible to describe.

King Michael heard this sound. All heard it, this voice of the people, as yet undecided. The king's face paled—terror smote home upon his soul. The courage of his usual alcoholic stimulant being tonight denied him, his weak nerves gave way.

He saw Count Frederick, now returning to the salon, from the great entrance door. The latter saw the terror on his monarch's face, and recognized on the instant the opportunity for himself to strengthen his own position in the king's good graces.

"Your majesty," exclaimed the astute nobleman, now advancing and offering his hand, "forgive me! I was in fault today in my conduct toward your majesty. 'Twas but a mad jest of my own. Give me but opportunity to prove my loyalty to your person and our country, and you shall not find me lacking. The people are about us—yes, it is true—there is danger of revolt, of revolution. I shall not attempt to deny that; but give me leave

to handle them, your majesty, and I promise you safety. I promise you to send them away."

"You've indeed my friend, after all, Count Frederick!" exclaimed Michael. "What you counsel seems wise. Use your own discretion, but disperse them—disperse them!"

Count Frederick, hastened to address the people, who now halted, uncertain as to what move next to make. His own agents had been among the people, and had made known his own plans. Yet here was their master, evidently, for some reason, disinclined to give the word for actual outbreak, and now counselling calm consideration, dispersal.

"My good people," began he, as he stood at the head of the great staircase above them—"his majesty thanks you for the honor you have done him in coming out upon this occasion. He himself has found great pleasure in coming here to meet you tonight, although he arose from a sick bed to do so. He wishes you to be calm in these

stirring days. He has planned this great ball in order that you might see the equanimity of his own soul in these events, so difficult alike for a king and his people to endure. Therefore, remain loyal to your king, whom I represent before you. The ballroom soon will be cleared. Go to your homes. Wait, and depend on us who have your true welfare at heart."

There surged up to him now the figures of more than one man, some in uniform, from places in the throng, in the street. "What is it—what is wrong—why do we not have the order to march on the palace?" they demanded eagerly.

"All's wrong," whispered the Count then. "For some reason, best known to himself, the king is not drunk to-night, but sober. His people are not turned against him—on the contrary, they seem to respect him more than they have done for months—there would be division among them if we started a new revolt now."

"Here, take this gold, my friends," he added, and scribbled himself of some considerable sums he had brought with him. "It is all I have given to those who need it most. Take them away from here—let them go to the drinking places. See that these places are filled now, and that the toast shall be 'Long live King Michael!'"

"We may not yet cry 'Long live King Frederick!'"

The nobleman shook his head. "Not yet," said he. "They still shall cry 'Long live King Michael.' That will do for the time at least."

Count Frederick returned through the great entryway and rejoined King Michael where he stood. "Your majesty," said he, "your people are returning to their homes."

"Frederick, my friend, my savior!" The weak king, his features working, grasped the hands of the stronger man. "You tell me they will disperse?"

"Even now they do so, your majesty."

Kitty, by this time somewhat forgotten in the king's vacillating mind, stood looking from one to the other of these two. As she read the situation, it carried something of defeat to her. An instant ago she herself had dominated the scene. Otherwise now, for Count Frederick gave her a somewhat sarcastic smile. It was the time of his triumph and of her discomfiture.

"Mademoiselle is distracted!" said he. "She is not dancing—she will return to her hotel, perhaps? What can one do for mademoiselle?"

Kitty turned toward him calmly. "If I might ask one of you gentlemen to secure my car for me?" Count Frederick smiled and bowed as he turned away.

But Kitty was not so soon to leave the great salon of the palace that night. She passed toward the entrance slowly, caught in the crush and confusion of others who were crowding out in the face of the much-vaunted black and white ball. For the time, she found herself in the shelter of a great column, where she was willing enough to pause. As she halted here she heard voices just behind her—one deep voice, which it seemed to her she had surely heard before.

"It is a pity that the affair did not come off tonight, your excellency," she heard another whisper hoarsely. "We have everything in our own hands now. I know well enough where lies the other half. Within the next twenty-four hours I will have it—I will have both halves within my own hands. Then, my friend, we shall see what we shall see! Events will happen which will surprise this part of the world, at least."

"Come to me tomorrow at my hunting lodge in the forest, at the edge of the neutral lands. That is the rendezvous of the other half of the coin. I shall seek a messenger to secure it. I know well enough how. Have our men there, for I, Count Sachio, will be prepared to show them all the reading of a riddle which has puzzled both these kingdoms for so long."

Had Kitty remained a moment or so longer she might have seen what the conspirators themselves, anxious as they were, did not see. The face of a strange man peered in at the window of the room which they occupied. He, too, could see now all that Kitty had seen, although he had not been noticed by the latter at the time of her departure.

The grand salon by this time was well cleared, and Kitty made her way rapidly toward the main exit. Suddenly she found herself face to face with a little group made up of the king and notables of his court. They too, for a time had been absent from the grand salon—apparently for a certain purpose. King Michael now did not lack the stimulus of wine. "Our fair young American again!" he exclaimed, as he came. "What, mademoiselle has not even yet departed?"

"It is my fault, your majesty," said Count Frederick. "I promised to secure for her a car, but for the time I lost sight of her. The confusion has been so great that it has been difficult to find service of the usual sort."

An attendant of the palace escorted her to her car—willing enough to conclude the events of the day.

"Tomorrow," said she to herself, as at length she composed herself for a brief slumber—"tomorrow I must be at the hunting lodge of Count Sachio once more!"



Slowly, Deliberately, He Raised His Right Hand Above the Unsuspecting Girl.

the missing treasure of old King Michael. He did rich, but like a miser, he hid his gold. He left a clue, yes—I have told you all of that. That clue was the broken coin.

"That coin was the same as a deed in the old days. All transfers of reality, as you remember, were made on parchment, written in pen, and the parchment always was cut in two pieces on a wavy line. The seller kept half the parchment, the buyer the other half. And always it ran 'This indenture witnesseth. The indenture was the wavy line which divided the parchment; and the parchment was proof of the transaction, so each holder held half the proof."

"Now, this indenture of the broken coin of Gretzhoft witnessed that Michael the First had transferred to his people his treasure—their treasure—he kept half the deed for himself, or for the man who was to stand for himself. In some way he meant to give the people the other half—that is to say, the other half of the indenture went somewhere, so one to this day can guess where—except myself!"

These papers of old told of the fortune chamber somewhere under the fort. Our maps cover that, but they do not mark the spot of the treasure's hiding. Only the old coin restored, indenture to indenture—the one-half to the other—ever can settle that.

"Now, look here, my friend," Count Sachio held up before him a little object, which caused Kitty to start where she stood.

It was the king's coin! Yes, there was the half coin which she with her own hands had sent for delivery to the king on the dancing floor at midnight that night—and Count Sachio, by means which he only knew, had been the thief! It now was plain to her. Here was one more claimant for the treasure of the dead king of Gretzhoft.

Count Sachio went on. "This is one-half only of the coin. Alone, it does not serve. I know well enough where lies the other half. Within the next twenty-four hours I will have it—I will have both halves within my own hands. Then, my friend, we shall see what we shall see! Events will happen which will surprise this part of the world, at least."

"Come to me tomorrow at my hunting lodge in the forest, at the edge of the neutral lands. That is the rendezvous of the other half of the coin. I shall seek a messenger to secure it. I know well enough how. Have our men there, for I, Count Sachio, will be prepared to show them all the reading of a riddle which has puzzled both these kingdoms for so long."

Had Kitty remained a moment or so longer she might have seen what the conspirators themselves, anxious as they were, did not see. The face of a strange man peered in at the window of the room which they occupied. He, too, could see now all that Kitty had seen, although he had not been noticed by the latter at the time of her departure.

The grand salon by this time was well cleared, and Kitty made her way rapidly toward the main exit. Suddenly she found herself face to face with a little group made up of the king and notables of his court. They too, for a time had been absent from the grand salon—apparently for a certain purpose. King Michael now did not lack the stimulus of wine. "Our fair young American again!" he exclaimed, as he came. "What, mademoiselle has not even yet departed?"

"It is my fault, your majesty," said Count Frederick. "I promised to secure for her a car, but for the time I lost sight of her. The confusion has been so great that it has been difficult to find service of the usual sort."

An attendant of the palace escorted her to her car—willing enough to conclude the events of the day.

"Tomorrow," said she to herself, as at length she composed herself for a brief slumber—"tomorrow I must be at the hunting lodge of Count Sachio once more!"

## CHAPTER XVI.

Another Seeks the Coin. Debarred by his own station in life from participating in any such function as the state ball, the faithful Roleau had contented himself as best

might be by remaining at the hotel until the return of his mistress. By morning, as soon as he got word of her presence in her apartments, he sent word that he was in readiness to be at her commands.

"Roleau," she said to him when they met, "listen. We have still more to do. There is still another journey across the desert."

"Whither, excellenza?" inquired Roleau.

"To the hunting lodge of the Count Sachio—the same place where you and I took the part of two horse thieves, Roleau!"

A few moments later the two, once more provided with a speedy motor car, were on their way down the avenues of the capital.

"I think it might be well to drive past the two palaces," said Kitty Gray. "We might pick up some news there. First, let us go to the palace of Count Frederick—perhaps he is not out this early."

But early though it was, Count Frederick was astray—was indeed ready for the street apparently, as was also his guest, Count Sachio. Even as Kitty's car swept by the palace front they saw the count and Sachio step into their own car, which waited for them.

"Quick!" said Kitty, sinking back deeper in the seat that she might not be observed. "Drive around the block. Don't let them see me." She motioned also to Roleau to conceal himself as best he might. Their own car, swinging around the corner, gave way to the vehicle of Count Frederick, which sped on down the street.

Once more, still undaunted, Kitty directed her own car to pass around the block and stop in front of Count Frederick's palace. This was done in the nick of time; for now, as they passed at lower speed, in order to have time for such examination as they cared to make of the exterior, they saw a man in some sort of official uniform walking from the front down the driveway for the side entrance of the great building.

"Stop!" cried Kitty to Roleau—"I know that man—that is a friend of Sachio! I saw the two of them together last night. It was to him Sachio showed the coin. I heard him tell this man where the missing half was Roleau, that man has gone to get Count Frederick's half of the coin!"

"Certainly, excellenza," said the stolid Roleau. "Count Sachio also means to put this and that together, does he not? What can we do? Your excellency gave me to try more entrance into Count Frederick's house?"

"Yes," said Kitty. "Come—let us see if we can trace where this man is going."

Once more these two presented themselves at the door of Count Frederick's abode, and were admitted without question.

The two passed without detention through the main hall to the passageway which Kitty knew so well. They followed down this narrow hall, suspecting that the destination of the man whom they had seen about to enter was none less than Count Frederick's little bedchamber.

Their suspicion was correct. Even as they approached they heard someone in the room who had arrived before themselves. Roleau, followed closely by Kitty, stepped up to the door—peered in, and gave one mighty bound.

In the powerful hands of Roleau, the stranger, taken by surprise, was helpless. Roleau clapped a hand over his mouth, another to his throat, and held him until he himself made the sign of submission. "Silence!" hissed Roleau. "Don't move—one word of alarm and I will end you!"

"What are you doing here?" demanded Kitty virtuously—"what do you seek—tell me!"

The man, gone sullen now, looked from one to the other, and knowing well enough what failure would mean for him, refused to speak. "Well, whatever it was," said he at length, "I have not found it. At least, you came too soon."

"I will tell you, excellenza," said Roleau at length. "It will do us no special good to have him join yonder party of which we know. I will tie him up, if your excellency will allow me."

Accordingly he did bind the traitor official of Gretzhoft neck and crop. "Quick!" said Kitty. Stealing away silently they left the door locked and took with them the key.

## CHAPTER XVII.

At Count Sachio's Lodge. Such speed did Roleau manage to get out of his own car that Kitty and he arrived at the hunting lodge of Count Sachio well in advance of all others bound thither that eventful morning.

Kitty and Roleau moved about very much as they pleased after their entry. It pleased them best to hide themselves in a small room adjacent to the main hall where they fancied the main events of the day's drama perhaps enacted. And as they had made connections between these two rooms, and behind the curtains in the smaller room they fancied they could be sufficiently concealed.

But there were others who had an interest in the events to occur in the hunting lodge of Count Sachio that morning. The tangled skein of the mysterious coin was expanding, drawing in yet others. Hardly had Kitty and Roleau secreted themselves before they heard footfalls under the window of the gallery which ran along that side of the chalet. They wondered who might be the author and what his purpose.

It was somewhat later before they heard the mingling of voices and the sound of footfalls.

"Rudolph!" exclaimed Count Sachio. "Why has he not come? What has gone wrong?"

But none could explain to him why Rudolph had not arrived—nor at the time did either Kitty or Roleau know who or what Rudolph might be—although, as a matter of fact, it was he whom they themselves had left tied hand and foot in Count Frederick's palace. Nor could any of these present know that before this time Count Frederick himself, returning to his palace, had found yonder intruder, bound and left helpless, in his own private apartment. The man had made such excuses as he could by declaring that he had been robbed and thrown in the room by a ruffian, assisted by a beautiful woman. And Count Frederick, finding on the floor of his own apartment a tiny handkerchief, had needed scarce more than one guess as to who that young woman had been.

But as to all these side scenes which had been enacted, Count Sachio was altogether ignorant. Wherefore he now walked up and down, now exclaiming his own doubts. His irritation was obvious enough to Kitty as she peered through the veiled curtain and strained her ears to learn what he was saying.

Even as she stood intent on what was going on in the main room, Roleau close at her side, also absorbed—the author of the stealthy footfalls on the gallery below the window crept silently up and looked in upon them as they watched—a spy upon those who in turn spied upon others.

"So, she is not alone!" he whispered to himself. "That man with her will make a different proposition. Be—"

Even as she stood intent on what was going on in the main room, Roleau close at her side, also absorbed—the author of the stealthy footfalls on the gallery below the window crept silently up and looked in upon them as they watched—a spy upon those who in turn spied upon others.

"So, she is not alone!" he whispered to himself. "That man with her will make a different proposition. Be—"

Even as she stood intent on what was going on in the main room, Roleau close at her side, also absorbed—the author of the stealthy footfalls on the gallery below the window crept silently up and looked in upon them as they watched—a spy upon those who in turn spied upon others.

"So, she is not alone!" he whispered to himself. "That man with her will make a different proposition. Be—"

Even as she stood intent on what was going on in the main room, Roleau close at her side, also absorbed—the author of the stealthy footfalls on the gallery below the window crept silently up and looked in upon them as they watched—a spy upon those who in turn spied upon others.

"So, she is not alone!" he whispered to himself. "That man with her will make a different proposition. Be—"

Even as she stood intent on what was going on in the main room, Roleau close at her side, also absorbed—the author of the stealthy footfalls on the gallery below the window crept silently up and looked in upon them as they watched—a spy upon those who in turn spied upon others.

"So, she is not alone!" he whispered to himself. "That man with her will make a different proposition. Be—"

Even as she stood intent on what was going on in the main room, Roleau close at her side, also absorbed—the author of the stealthy footfalls on the gallery below the window crept silently up and looked in upon them as they watched—a spy upon those who in turn spied upon others.

"So, she is not alone!" he whispered to himself. "That man with her will make a different proposition. Be—"

Even as she stood intent on what was going on in the main room, Roleau close at her side, also absorbed—the author of the stealthy footfalls on the gallery below the window crept silently up and looked in upon them as they watched—a spy upon those who in turn spied upon others.

"So, she is not alone!" he whispered to himself. "That man with her will make a different proposition. Be—"

Even as she stood intent on what was going on in the main room, Roleau close at her side, also absorbed—the author of the stealthy footfalls on the gallery below the window crept silently up and looked in upon them as they watched—a spy upon those who in turn spied upon others.

"So, she is not alone!" he whispered to himself. "That man with her will make a different proposition. Be—"

Even as she stood intent on what was going on in the main room, Roleau close at her side, also absorbed—the author of the stealthy footfalls on the gallery below the window crept silently up and looked in upon them as they watched—a spy upon those who in turn spied upon others.

## IN WORLD OF SPORTS

4 NATIONAL LEAGUE.

Standing of the Teams.	W.	L.	Pct.
Pittsburgh	42	43	.503
Chicago	49	45	.521
Brooklyn	51	47	.520
Boston	50	48	.510
New York	48	47	.505
Pittsburgh	48	49	.495
St. Louis	47	54	.465
Cincinnati	42	54	.438

AMERICAN LEAGUE.

Standing of the Teams.	W.	L.	Pct.
Boston	59	34	.634
Detroit	60	38	.615
Chicago	59	40	.596
Washington	53	46	.535
New York	59	47	.550
St. Louis	53	53	.502
Cleveland	56	57	.387
Philadelphia	33	63	.341

FEDERAL LEAGUE.

Standing of the Teams.	W.	L.	Pct.
Kansas City	57	40	.588
Chicago	57	42	.576
St. Louis	56	43	.566
Pittsburgh	55	49	.525
Newark	51	45	.531
Brooklyn	45	57	.441
Buffalo	45	59	.433
Baltimore	34	66	.340

WESTERN LEAGUE.

Standing of the Teams.	W.	L.	Pct.
Des Moines	61	38	.616
Denver	61	38	.616
Lincoln	59	48	.579
Topeka	51	52	.495
Sioux City	48	51	.485
Omaha	48	55	.466
Wichita	42	57	.424
St. Joseph	37	61	.377

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION.

Standing of the Teams.	W.	L.	Pct.
St. Paul	55	49	.602
Minneapolis	57	48	.543
Indianapolis	55	48	.534
Kansas City	51	51	.514
Louisville	58	52	.522
Cleveland	45	54	.455
Milwaukee	38	57	.400
Columbus	39	65	.375

WESTERN ASSOCIATION.

Standing of the Teams.			
	W.	L.	Pct.
Denison .....	65	44	.600
Sherman .....	64	49	.565
Oklahoma City .....	62	52	.544
Muskogee .....	58	54	.518
Paris .....	55	57	.491
Tulsa .....	54	60	.474
Fort Smith .....	51	63	.447
McAlester .....	42	73	.365